

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 24

The Dream of Specialness

Section VII

Your Own Beloved Son

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary.

Overview of Section VII

Here, the Course compares the Son of God to the body, calling it “the son of man,” the tool that our separated consciousness uses to validate its existence. It shows how the apparent reality of the body depends on the body itself for proof of its own existence. It says that perception is the product of our wishes. It asks us to choose a different purpose for our perception: To see the Son of God.

Paragraph 1

How bitterly does everyone tied to this world defend the specialness he wants to be the truth! ²His wish is law to him, and he obeys. ³Nothing his specialness demands does he withhold. ⁴Nothing it needs does he deny to what he loves. ⁵And while it calls to him, he hears no other voice. ⁶No effort is too great, no cost too much, no price too dear to save his specialness from the least slight, the tiniest attack, the whispered doubt, the hint of threat, or anything but deepest reverence. ⁷This is your son, beloved of you as you are to your Father.¹ ⁸Yet it stands in place of your creations, who *are* son to you that you might share the fatherhood of God, not snatch it from Him.²

• Study Questions •

1. 1:5. *This is a reference to 24.II.4. What does this sentence imply about why we have difficulty receiving guidance?*

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¹. Matthew 3:17 (KJV): “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

². The two sons here are your specialness and your creations in Heaven.

Do you think of yourself as “bitterly” defending your specialness? The Course says that “everyone tied to this world” does it, because they want their specialness to be the truth (1:1). Probably most people who have spent enough time with this Course to reach this section have loosened their ties to this world, at least to some extent, but I think all of us *do* defend our specialness far more often and more doggedly than we realize. We’ve all seen some blatant examples of extreme egocentricity, and have decried them. We’ve evolved beyond that, certainly. But do we realize that, in stressing that we are not like that, we are making ourselves different and, in a way, defending our own specialness? Anything other than Oneness is specialness or separation. (For more on this idea, see Appendix, Matthew Fox quotation.)

When we hold to the wish that specialness be the truth, it becomes a law to us that we must obey; we cannot resist the demands of our specialness (1:2–3). Because we love our specialness, we give it whatever it asks (1:4). And as long as we are listening to the voice of our specialness, we cannot hear any other voice, not even the Voice for God (1:5).

Whether or not we voice it, most of us are very sensitive to “the least slight, the tiniest attack, the whispered doubt, the hint of threat” (1:6). We can observe this more readily in others than in ourselves, of course, but what else would you expect of specialness? People will seemingly go to any lengths to guard their high opinion of themselves. The cost they pay or demand that others pay is sometimes incredibly out of proportion to the insult they perceive. Sometimes the slight exists only in their imagination. The Course’s language here may seem extreme, but examples abound confirming its accuracy. The hard part, the most threatening to our own specialness, is to realize the extent to which these words apply to ourselves.

Our specialness is like a son to us, and we love it as much as God the Father loves us as His sons (1:7). (This is the “beloved son” of the chapter title.) We have other sons—our creations, the result of the Spirit of God moving through us bringing healing and wholeness, so that we *share* God’s Fatherhood rather than trying to be a creator in His place.³ But either we are prevented from giving birth to these creations or we are blinded to them when we have done so, because our specialness displaces them in our minds (1:8).

³ The nature of our creations is further described later in the section, in 7:2 especially. This is the closest the Course comes to telling us exactly what our creations are.

Paragraph 2

2 What is this son that you have made to be your strength? 3What is this child of earth on whom such love is lavished? 3What is this parody of God's creation that takes the place of yours?⁴ 4And where are they, now that the host of God has found another son that he prefers to them? 5The memory of God shines not alone. 6What is within your brother still contains all of creation, everything created and creating, born and unborn as yet, still in the future or apparently gone by. 7What is in him is changeless, and your changelessness is recognized in its acknowledgment. 8The holiness in you belongs to him, and by your seeing it in him returns to you.

• Study Question •

2. 2:3. What does “yours” refer to at the end of this sentence?

Jesus starts this paragraph with three rhetorical questions.⁵ He calls our specialness a “child of earth” and a “parody of God’s creation”. He says we have made it to be our strength, we lavish it with our love, and we allow it to take the place of our true creations, which seem to be lost now that we have given preference to our specialness (2:1–4). “What is this?” he cries, three times. It cannot possibly be worth what we have paid for it. And what’s more, it only exists in our imagination. There *is* nothing outside of God.

“The memory of God shines not alone” (1:5). It is shining in you; it shines as well in your brother. It then goes on to speak of “What is within your brother.” That may refer to the memory of God, or to God Himself; I think it is the latter. What follows in the sentence seems to make more sense to me that way: God “still contains *all* of creation, everything created and creating, born and unborn as yet, still in the future or apparently gone by” (1:6). As Matthew Fox wrote (in the Appendix to this commentary), “To exist outside the circle of being that is God is not to exist at all.”

As an aside, it’s interesting to think about the view of time that is reflected here. All of time is in God. Everything that to us is in the future, or that is *apparently* gone by. The clear implication there is that what is past only appears to us to be gone; it still exists in God. What does that imply about what life is (will be?) like when we have fully realized our oneness with God?

So, the point here is that because God is in your brother, all of this is in your brother. Furthermore, it “is changeless.” It’s not going anywhere. It cannot be lost. When we acknowledge the truth of this about our brother, *we* recognize our own changeless too

⁴ “Yours” refers to your creations (not your creation by God), which explains “they” and “them” in the next sentence.

⁵ **rhetorical question:** a question asked in order to create a dramatic effect or to make a point rather than to get an answer.

(1:7). The holiness that is ours is also his, and it returns to our awareness as we see it in another (1:8).

If nothing else comes of reading all this, I hope it awakens in you an intense desire to *experience* what it is talking about, and to add fervency to your repetition of the lesson, “Above all else I want to see things differently.”

Paragraph 3

3 All of the tribute you have given specialness belongs to him, and thus returns to you. ²All of the love and care, the strong protection, the thought by day and night, the deep concern, the powerful conviction this is you, belongs to him. ³Nothing you gave to specialness but is *his* due. ⁴And nothing due him is not due to you. ⁵How will you know your worth while specialness claims you instead? ⁶How can you *fail* to know it in his holiness? ⁷Seek not to make your specialness the truth, for if it were, you would be lost indeed. ⁸Be thankful, rather, it is given you to see his holiness *because* it is the truth. ⁹And what is true in him must be as true in you.

• Study Questions •

3. *Please summarize this paragraph, trying to capture the primary contrast between your specialness and his holiness and the results attached to being devoted to each.*
4. *What common conception does this sentence reverse?*

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“Him” in this paragraph continues to refer to your brother.

Think, for a moment, of all the attention you give to maintaining your self. Tribute, love and care, strong protection, thought by day and night, deep concern, and (above all, I think) “the powerful conviction this is you” — you have given all this to your specialness, as we all have (3:1–2). But all of it belongs, not to specialness, but to your brother. Only when it is given to him does it finally return to you (3:1). He deserves it and so do you, but specialness does not (3:3–4).

As long as we focus on specialness, either in ourselves or in others, we cannot possibly know our true worth. When we acknowledge holiness in another, we cannot fail to recognize our own worth as well (3:5–6). It may seem like Jesus is repeating this idea too frequently. Maybe you are thinking, “I get it already!” But ask yourself, “When is the last time you recognized holiness in another person so clearly you knew it was true of yourself?” I don’t think it’s possible for us to hear this message too often. We need to move beyond just seeing Oneness (as great as that is!) to seeing *from* Oneness, to the place where Oneness has become our normal mode of perception.

For that to happen, we must stop trying to make our specialness the truth (3:7). As the mystics have long said, we must “die to self.” The Course does not use that phrase, but I think dying is what letting go of our specialness feels like. That’s why we think it is so

difficult. When Jesus spoke of physical death in the *Song of Prayer* booklet, he made this point:

"This is what death should be; a quiet choice, made joyfully and with a sense of peace, because the body has been kindly used to help the Son of God along the way he goes to God. We thank the body, then, for all the service it has given us. But we are thankful, too, the need is done to walk the world of limits, and to reach the Christ in hidden forms and clearly seen at most in lovely flashes. Now we can behold Him without blinders, in the light that we have learned to look upon again.

We call it death, but it is liberty" (S-3.II.2:1-3:1 (FIP)).

The same is true of relinquishing our hold on specialness. It isn't death; it's liberty. Rather than bemoaning what we lose, we can be grateful for at last perceiving the truth, and knowing that what is true in this brother must also be true in myself (3:8-9).

Paragraph 4

4 Ask yourself this: Can you protect the mind? ²The body, yes, a little; not from time, but temporarily. ³And much you think to save, you hurt. ⁴What would you save it for? ⁵For in that choice lie both its health and harm. ⁶Save it for show, as bait to catch another fish, to house your specialness in better style, or weave a frame of loveliness around your hate, and you condemn it to decay and pain. ⁷And if you see this purpose in your brother's, such is your condemnation of your own. ⁸Weave rather, then, a frame of holiness around him, that the truth may shine in him and give you safety from decay.

• Study Questions •

5. 4:3,5. *What does it mean here by "saving" the body? Think about sentences 1 and 2 that speak of protecting the body, not from time, but temporarily.*
6. 4:6. *Think of an example of you trying to preserve your body for one of these reasons (which are really all the same). What is "your hate" here?*
7. 4:7. *Your brother's what, your own what?*
8. 4:8. *How do you "weave...a frame of holiness" around your brother? In addition to examining the previous two sentences, you might want to skip ahead to 25.II.6.*

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The specialness we think we want to protect is a bit hard to define. We know, at least dimly, that what we are is a mind. But mind isn't a visible thing, it isn't easy to grab hold

⁶. "It" in this sentence is the body. To "weave a frame of loveliness around your hate" probably connects with the previous chapter's discussion (see T-23.IV.1-2) of expressing murderous intent in a "loving" (or even "lovely"—see T-23.IV.2:5) form.

of, and as such, we really have no way of knowing how to protect it. But a body? That we can protect, at least to some extent, for a relatively short time. So we tend to express our desire to preserve our specialness by taking care of our bodies (4:1–2).

That strategy is a two-edged sword, however. Many of the things we do trying to protect and promote our physical selfhood are actually harmful to the body. In the last century we have become more and more aware that things like fear, anxiety, and anger, which are mental attitudes that we take on to protect ourselves, actually have a disastrous *negative* effect on the body's health (4:3-5). If our taking care of the body means that we “save it for show, as bait to catch another fish, to house your specialness in better style, or weave a frame of loveliness around your hate,” we have brought “decay and death” to the body (4:6). What's more, if you believe that is what your brother is doing, you are projecting your own condemnation for what you do onto him (4:7). What you must learn to do is to look past his specialness to the holiness within, and focus on that, so that you will find “safety from decay” (4:8).

Paragraph 5

5 The Father keeps what He created safe.⁷ You cannot touch it with the false ideas you made, because it was created not by you. ³Let not your foolish fancies frighten you. ⁴What is immortal cannot be attacked; what is but temporal has no effect. ⁵Only the *purpose* that you see in it has meaning, and if that is true its safety rests secure. ⁶If not, it has no purpose and is means for nothing. ⁷Whatever is perceived as means for truth shares in its holiness, and rests in light as safely as itself.⁸ ⁸Nor will that light go out when it is gone. ⁹Its holy purpose gave it immortality, setting another light in Heaven where your creations recognize a gift from you, a sign that you have not forgotten them.

⁷. What the Father created and keeps safe is *the mind*. This sentence, then, is part of the answer to the question from the beginning of the previous paragraph: “*Can you protect the mind?*”

⁸. Pronoun clarification: “Whatever is perceived as means for truth shares in its [truth's] holiness, and rests in light as safely as itself [truth itself].”

• **Study Questions** •

9. 5:1-4. *These sentences are talking about the mind. They are the answer to the question, “Can you protect the mind?” (4:1) They also answer a fear of ours. What is that fear (note especially the “f” words in sentences 2 and 3).*
10. 5:5-6. *What does “it” refer to in these two sentences?*
11. 5: 7. *What does “its” and “itself” refer to here?*
12. 5:8-9. *What does “it” refer to in these two sentences?*
13. 5:9. *In light of earlier statements in this section, why might your creations think you have forgotten them?*

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The Truth of God’s creation cannot be touched by your false ideas; God keeps His creations safe (5:1-2). That’s reassuring to me. It tells me that my unfortunate ideas of specialness can’t harm the truth of my being; I don’t need to be afraid of my “foolish fancies” (5:3). My Self is immortal; it cannot be affected by anything bound by time (5:4). Even though I am not aware of it, my True Self continues to create:

“Extension cannot be blocked, and it has no voids. It continues forever, however much it is denied. Your denial of its reality arrests it in time but not in eternity. That is why your creations have not ceased to be extended, and why so much is waiting for your return.” (T-11.I.7:5-8:1 (CE), T-11.I.3:5-8 (FIP)).

The only meaning of things bound by time, such as my body, lies in the purpose that I give it. If I give it a true purpose, then my body’s “safety rests secure” (5:5). If the purpose I give it is not true (for example, the things mentioned in 4:6), then my body has no real purpose, “and is means for nothing” (5:6). We should be using our bodies as means for truth, that is, using them in whatever way supports and promotes the idea of oneness, the truth of holiness, and the reality of love. In this way, our bodies come to share in the holiness of truth itself, and are safe and secure in the light (5:7).

That light is a light that will continue to exist after the body itself is gone (5:8). The holy purpose we give to the body bestows immortality on that light, setting a light in Heaven that your creations can see as “a gift from *you*, a sign that you have *not* forgotten them” (5:9).

Paragraph 6

6 The test of everything on earth is simply this: “What is it *for*?” ²The answer makes it what it is for you. ³It has no meaning of itself, yet you can give reality to it, according to the purpose which you serve. ⁴Here you are but means, along with it. ⁵God is a means as well as end. ⁶In Heaven means and end are one, and one with Him. ⁷This is the state of true creation, found not within time, but in eternity. ⁸To no one here is this describable, nor is there any way to learn what this condition means—not till you go past learning to the given, not till you make again a holy home for your creations, is it understood.

• Study Question •

14. 6:1-3. *So, in light of these sentences and of paragraph 4, if your body is decaying, to what purpose have you dedicated it?*
15. 6:3. *According to this sentence, what determines the purpose that you assign to the things of earth, such as the body? (By the way, a very similar idea is expressed in 22.VIII.1-3 (CE), 22.VI.1-3 (FIP).)*
16. 6:10. *The idea of making again a holy home for your creations suggests you have thrown them out. How have you, based on earlier statements in this section?*

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Note that “purpose,” “end,” “aim,” and what something is “for” all refer to the exact same idea. Note also that “means” and serving a purpose are the same idea.

The purpose we give to anything is the test of its truth and worth (6:1). “What is this for?” is something we should be asking a lot more often. “The answer makes it what it is for you” (6:2). Meaning of a thing does not lie in the thing itself, but in the purpose we have chosen (6:3). Even we ourselves are a means to an end; even “*God is a means as well as End*” (6:4–5). He goes on to say that in Heaven means and end are one, and one with God (6:6). I am not entirely sure what those last two sentences mean, and maybe understanding things as they are in Heaven is beyond our abilities. In fact, he says as much in 6:7–9. We won’t be able to understand until we “go *past* learning to the Given; not till you make again a holy home for your creations” (6:10).

I wonder, however, why he says these things if we cannot understand them. He says it is the state of true creation. That makes it pretty clear to me that what we do here, within the illusion of the world, is *not* true creation.⁹ Maybe that’s one thing we can learn from his paradoxical declarations about means and end being one.

⁹ "In this world it is impossible to create" (T-17.IV.2:1).

Paragraph 7

7 A co-creator with the Father must have a son.¹⁰ ²Yet must this son have been created like himself: a perfect being, all-encompassing and all-encompassed, nothing to add and nothing taken from, not born of size nor weight nor time, nor held to limits or uncertainties of any kind. ³Here do the means and end unite as one, nor does this one have any end at all. ⁴All this is true, and yet it has no meaning to anyone who still retains one unlearned lesson in his memory, one thought with purpose still uncertain, or one wish with a divided aim.

• Study Question •

17. 7:1-2. *Who is the “son” here?*

18. 7:3. *What do you think “here” refers to—where do “means and end unite as one”?*

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To be a father, a creator like God, you have to have offspring (7:1). You have to have *creations*. But, to be a creator *like God*, these creations must have been created by you like yourself, like you as God created you. Here, Jesus proceeds to describe what that means in some detail. What is a creation of God, and therefore, what are our creations?

A creation, both of God and of ourselves, are:

- a perfect being
- all-encompassing
- all-encompassed
- nothing to add
- nothing taken *from*
- not born of size nor weight nor time
- not held to limits or uncertainties of any kind

I will expand on each of those points, but I'll try to be brief. First, let me point out that this description applies not only to your creations but to *you*, since you are a creation of God.

“A perfect being.” Creations, then, are beings, not things. To be all-encompassing means that a creation includes everything. The only way I can begin to understand that is to realize it is based on the concept of Oneness: Each perfect being created contains the whole of Oneness. Likewise, each perfect being is “encompassed,” included in the allness of the Oneness. Therefore, there is nothing that can be added to it; it contains all. But nothing it has is taken *from* anything else, either.

¹⁰. The “co-creator” is you and the “son” is your creation (usually discussed in the plural: creations). Paragraph 1 also calls your creations your “son,” when it speaks of “your creations, who *are* son to you” (1:8).

A creation is not physical (not born of size nor weight), and not part of time. It exists outside of time. It is unlimited by anything; it is one with the Oneness, with all that is, instantly, in the eternal now.

This confusing description somehow makes what was said earlier, about means and end being one, a little clearer. Jesus adds, “Here do the means and end unite as one, nor does this one have any end at all (7:3).” Here” is referring to the creative process just described; father and son are one, without end. He then goes on to tell us that really understanding this isn’t possible as long as we have any lesson unlearned, any uncertainty of purpose or divided aims—which pretty much includes everyone (7:4).

For me, it comes down to a realization that the ultimate purpose is this Oneness, a Oneness I can love and aspire to without having to fully understand It. That is what my body is for, that is what I am for, that is what the world is for.

Paragraph 8

8 This course makes no attempt to teach what cannot easily be learned. ²Its scope does not exceed your own, except to say that what is yours will come to you when you are ready. ³Here are the means and purpose separate, because they were so made and so perceived. ⁴And therefore do we deal with them as if they were. ⁵It is essential it be kept in mind that all perception still is upside down until its purpose has been understood. ⁶Perception does not seem to be a means, and it is this that makes it hard to grasp the whole extent to which it must depend on what you use it *for*.

• Study Question •

19. 8:1. *In light of the previous two paragraphs, what specifically does the Course not attempt to teach (for a nearly identical sentiment, see T-IN.1:6)?*
20. 8:3. *Where is “here”?*
21. 8:6. *Perception is a means, a means to what? To get this you might need to chew on the following few sentences?*

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In Paragraph 6, we were told that there is no way to *learn* what the state of true creation is; it is not found in time, but only in eternity. Only as we choose to rejoin our eternal purpose of creating with and in God will we come to know the state of true creation, for we will be in it. So here in Paragraph 8, the first sentence is most likely referring to that impossible learning. The Course, it says, isn’t trying to impart that understanding. It limits itself to our capacity to receive and understand its message (8:1-2).

It does speak of things beyond our capability to learn, but only to give us a preview of “what... will come to you when you are ready” (8:2). In that heavenly state, means and end are one, but by contrast, “Here are the means and the purpose separate because they

were so made and so perceived” (8:3). Therefore, the Course deals with means and end (or purpose) as if they were separate (8:4). In order to reach our twisted minds, the Course adapts itself to our distorted way of thinking and seeing things.

You’ll note that one key factor in our belief that means and end are separate is that this is how we have *perceived* them. Indeed, one significant example of our upside-down thinking is what we believe about perception: We think it is an end, a result, and not a means. We fail to recognize that the *purpose* we assign to perception affects what perception shows us (8:5–6). It shows us only what we want to see.

Paragraph 9

9 Perception seems to teach you what you see, yet it but witnesses to what you taught. ²It is the outward picture of a wish, an image that you wanted to be true. ³Look at yourself, and you will see a body. ⁴Look at this body in a different light, and it looks different. ⁵And without a light, it seems that it is gone. ⁶Yet you are reassured that it is there, because you still can feel it with your hands and hear it move.

• Study Question •

22. *Really do this little exercise. Look at your body, then look at it in a different light, then turn the lights out (or close your eyes) and listen and feel for it. This may sound silly but it will have more impact if you do.*

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Thinking we are the ego, needing to protect our specialness and dispose of any guilt, we use perception to those ends:

"Projection makes perception. The world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that. But though it is no more than that, it is not less. Therefore, to you it is important. It is the witness to your state of mind, the outside picture of an inward condition. As a man thinketh, so does he perceive. Therefore, seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world. Perception is a result and not a cause. " (T-21.Int.1:1-8 (FIP)).

How we perceive the world is the result of what we told our perception to show us. It seems to us that our perception is *informing* us about the world out there. In fact, it shows us what we wished to see, what we “*wanted to be true*” (9:1–2). That is the purpose we’ve given perception. But if we choose to give our perception a different purpose, it will show us a different world.

Take your perception of your body, for example. In different conditions of light it will look different. If there is no light you won’t see the body at all! Even so, you still know the body is there because “you still can feel it with your hands and hear it move” (9:3–6).

What’s the point Jesus wants to make here? It all seems pretty obvious, doesn’t it? And *that* is exactly the point: We accept our body as ourselves without question. He goes on to make his point in the next paragraph.

Paragraph 10

10 Here is the image that you *want* to be yourself. ²It is the means to make your wish come true. ³It *gives* the eyes with which you look on it, the hands that feel it, and the ears with which you listen to the sounds it makes. ⁴*It proves its own reality to you.* ⁵Thus is the body made a theory of yourself, with no provisions made for evidence beyond itself, and no escape within its sight. ⁶Its course is sure, when seen through its own eyes. ⁷It grows and withers, flourishes and dies. ⁸And you cannot conceive of you apart from it. ⁹You brand it sinful and you hate its acts, judging it evil. ¹⁰Yet your specialness whispers, “Here is my own beloved son, with whom I am well pleased.”¹¹

• Study Question •

23. 10:1. Notice the same phrase as in 9:2: “an image that you want.” This paragraph, then, is an example of how we make perception to show us what we want to see. In this example, what is the image that we want to be true, and how have we made perception to show us that image?
24. 10:5. What does it mean that there is “no escape within its sight”?
25. 10:9. Can you think of an example of you hating your body’s acts? It might be helpful to read this in light of 31.VII.3:2: “The actions of the body are perceived as coming from the ‘baser’ part of you....” When have you seen your body’s actions as something coming from the baser, animal part of you, a part which goes against your higher sensibilities?

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“Here is the image that you *want* to be yourself” (10:1). “Here is.” What is “here”? The body. We see it because (9:2) we wanted it to be true. We wanted to be separate, and the body came about because, “It is the means to make your wish come true” (10:2). What substantiates the body for us? Its eyes. Its hands. Its ears. “*It proves its own reality to you*” (10:4). This is akin to taking the testimony of a murderer as to his own innocence.

“I didn’t do it.”

“Oh! Okay, you’re free to go.”

What evidence is there of the body’s reality that does not come from the body itself? There is none. And that’s the point: We are using the body’s tools of perception to prove to ourselves that the body is us. We’re caught in a trap, victims of a theory about ourselves that isn’t true, a self-validating illusion that provides no means of escape (10:5–6).

When we depend on the perceptions of the body, the path of our life is predetermined: The body “grows and withers, flourishes and dies” (10:7). And we’re stuck with it,

¹¹. Matthew 3:17 (KJV): “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” In the above passage, the voice of specialness says this about our body.

unable to conceive of ourselves as *apart from the body* (10:8). We may blame the body for our sins. We may hate what we do with it (or what it does with us), and call it evil (10:9), as so many religious fanatics have done over the centuries, resulting in extremes of self-abuse such as flagellation, hair shirts, starvation, and physical mutilation such as castration or clitoridectomy. Yet all the while, “specialness whispers, ‘Here is my own beloved son, in whom I am well pleased’” (10:10).¹²

Paragraph 11

11 Thus does the son become the means to serve his father’s purpose—not identical nor even like, but still a means to offer to the father what he wants. ²Such is the travesty on God’s creation. ³For as His Son’s creation gave Him joy, and witnessed to His love and shared His purpose, so does the body testify to the idea that made it, and speak for *its* reality and truth. ⁴And thus are two sons made, and both appear to walk this earth without a meeting place and no encounter. ⁵One do you see outside yourself, your *own* beloved son. ⁶The other rests within, His Father’s Son, within your brother as He is in you.¹³

• Study Question •

26. 11:1. *Who is the son and who is the father here?*

27. 11:2–3. *The body is a travesty on creation. For it stands in the same relationship to the idea that made it as God’s Son stands in relation to His Father. What idea made the body?*

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There are similarities between God’s Son and our “son” (the body). Both are means to serve the purpose of their father, but the purposes given to each are “not identical nor even like,” yet both sons are “a means to offer to the father *what he wants*” (11:1). “Such is the travesty on God’s creation” (11:2). When I see the parallels here, it really *is* a travesty, a perversion of something holy into something ugly and awful.

And yet, the parallel is very informative, isn’t it? God created His Son to bring Him joy, to witness to His love and to share His purpose. We can see how the body plays the same role for the ego: It speaks of the idea of separation that made it, and witnesses to the truth and reality of that (false) idea (11:3).

So now there are (or seem to be) two sons, God’s Son and the body. Both seem to “walk this earth without a meeting place and *no* encounter” (11:4). Some people (including you who read this, I believe) are aware of the incorporeal Son, a Presence within us all, and also aware of the bodies we seem to inhabit. The body, the ego’s

¹² This, of course, is the ego’s theft of God’s declaration about Jesus at his baptism: “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17 KJV)

¹³ The “two sons” here are your body and God’s Son, your true nature. This is different than the first paragraph of this section, where the two sons are your specialness and your creations.

beloved son, appears to be *outside* of us and we inside of it. The Father's Son is within us, both in us and in our brothers and sisters (11:5–6). That's how things appear to most of us, if not all of us. Two sons, one without and one within, and (so it seems) never the twain shall meet.

Paragraph 12

12 Their difference does not lie in how they look or where they go or even what they do. ²They share a different purpose. ³It is this that joins them to their like, and separates each from all aspects with a different purpose. ⁴The Son of God retains his Father's will. ⁵The son of man perceives an alien will and wishes it were so.¹⁴ ⁶And thus does his perception serve his wish by giving it appearances of truth. ⁷Yet can perception serve another goal. ⁸It is not bound to specialness but by your choice. ⁹And it is given you to make a different choice and use perception for a different purpose. ¹⁰And what you see will serve that purpose well, and prove its own reality to you.

• Study Question •

28. 12:4. *What is the Son's purpose?*
29. 12:5. *The son of man here is not the body, but your separated mind. What purpose does the son of man serve; what is the alien will?*
30. 12:6. *Please rephrase this sentence, adding brief explanations for these two things: What is "his wish" and what are "appearances of truth"?*
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Interpretive Note: In his footnote to 12:5 (below), Robert Perry says the "son of man" is the sleeping Son of God. I disagree. I think it refers to the body. In a preceding note (#35 in the book), he says: "The "two sons" here are your body and God's Son, your true nature." And in this paragraph, it mentions two sons: "The Son of God" in 4, and "the son of man" in 5. It's fairly clear this paragraph is speaking of the same two sons as the preceding paragraph. The opening lines of Paragraph 12 continue discussing the two sons mentioned in Paragraph 11, referring to "them", "they," and "their," leading right in to the two sons mentioned in 4 and 5. It would be peculiar if it shifted without warning to a different meaning for "son of man."

Two sons. What distinguishes them from one another is their purpose. Each has its own purpose, and the two purposes are diametrically opposed. One serves the purpose of Oneness and Wholeness; the other serves the purpose of separation and specialness. Despite their differences, both tell us they are us, they are what we are (12:1–2).

The purpose of each son unites it with what is like itself and separates it from everything that has a different purpose. The Son of God serves God's will, the son of man

¹⁴. The "son of man" here seems to be what is elsewhere called the sleeping Son of God. See footnote 1 in the next chapter.

serves an (imaginary) alien will of specialness, and wishes that alien will were real (12:3–5). The wish for the alien will produces perception that *appears* to make it true (12:6). Thus is perception misused.

You, however, have the ability to choose a different purpose for perception. You can choose to see the reality of the Son of God, God's creation in everyone and everything. If you use perception for that purpose, your perception will show you what you wish to see, and will prove to you that *it* is real (12:7–10).

Legend:

Light underscoring indicates emphasis that appears in the Urtext or shorthand notes.

The Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement's Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the "CE" for "Complete Edition" or "Circle Edition"). Please be aware that, even when the wording is identical to the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often entirely different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the FIP edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. Passages that lie outside the current section will continue to have footnoted references. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

Footnotes by the commentary author are shown in this font and size. Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.

Answer Key

1. Hearing the call of our specialness blots out the Holy Spirit's Voice.
2. Your creations, which are also "they" and "them" in the next sentence.
3. While devoted to your specialness (to making it the truth) you are lost and cannot know your worth. But while devoted to seeing your brother's holiness (*because* it is the truth) you will know the truth, the worth and the holiness in you.
4. The conception that specialness *is* worth.
5. Saving the body means preserving the body as it ages.
6. Your specialness. The image is of the body being a lovely frame around its inner contents or "soul."
7. Body.
8. You seem him surrounded by holiness rather than surrounded by a body.
9. The fear that our false ideas and foolish fancies can damage who we really are. If this fear is not true, then we are safe from ourselves.
10. What is temporal; specifically, the body.
11. Truth.
12. What is temporal; specifically, the body.
13. The first paragraph said that by lavishing all of our devotion onto our false son, our specialness, we have forgotten our true sons.
14. Specialness.
15. The purpose that *you* serve.
16. With your devotion to specialness (see 1:8).
17. Your creations.
18. I believe that means and end uniting as one refers to you and your "son" (your creations) being identical, to your son being created like you. In other words, the lofty description in sentence 3 refers to both your creations and to you.
19. The meaning of the means and end being one.

20. In this world.
21. Perception is a means to the goal (or end or purpose) you have chosen. It shows you (you manipulate it to show you) what you wish, what you want to be true, the goal you seek.
22. No reply needed.
23. We made the body's senses—its organs of perception—to show us that we are a body. The body is the image we wanted to see ourselves as.
24. The next three sentences answer this.
25. Your answer will be unique to yourself.
26. The son is the body, the father is your specialness.
27. Specialness.
28. The same as his Father's.
29. Specialness (see 12:8).
30. And thus does his perception serve his wish for specialness by giving specialness appearances of truth, especially in the form of the body.